

## GENERAL SYNOD

## Resourcing Ministerial Education in the Church of England

*A report from the Task Group*

1. The Resourcing Ministerial Education (RME) Task Group was appointed by the Ministry Council to develop **proposals for the most effective use of resources** for ministerial education. In 2014-15 the budget for training ordinands is £13.5m and £5m for additional family maintenance costs. Dioceses and parishes provide a further £1.8m for the costs of context-based training. These funds are restricted for use to pay for college or course education for ordinands training under Bishops' Regulations.
2. The Task Group offers its report in the name of the Gospel, seeking to strengthen the ministry of the Church to bring and to be the Good News of Jesus Christ for the communities which the Church of England serves. In its collaboration with the four other Task Groups it seeks to align the resources given to ministerial education in the Church of England with the **three goals for the quinquennium**: serving the common good, spiritual and numerical growth and re-imagining ministry.
3. The Task Group brought its interim report in November to the Ministry Council, the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops. The Council and the House:
  - Endorsed the agreed vision of the RME Task Group and the understanding that significant further resources are required (paragraphs 6-14)
  - Endorsed in outline the proposals for a new initiative to increase vocations to ordained and lay ministry (paragraphs 15-24)
  - Offered initial comment on Proposals 1-12 at this stage of the consultation (paragraphs 33-45 )
  - Encouraged the Task Group to continue with the further work of consultation, financial planning and proposals on lay ministry
4. The Report has been revised in the light of comments made at the House of Bishops and the Archbishops' Council. Publication of the Report for General Synod marks the beginning of a period of consultation on its proposals not only with the Synod but with Dioceses, theological educators and Theological Education Institutions. Following consultation more detailed proposals will be brought back to the House and the Council in due course. Details of the consultation process and timetable will be published separately.
5. We recognise the particular moment of opportunity presented by the Task Groups to bring more resources to bear on the key task of ministerial education. We recognise the sense across the Church that significant change is required. We give thanks for the large number of partners in that task and the different perspectives and wisdom each will bring to the conversation. We have done our best to work prayerfully, seeking to discern the mind of the Spirit for the future of the Church. At each meeting of the Task Group we have used this prayer, and commend its use to the wider Church as these matters are debated further in the coming months:

Almighty Father,  
Give us grace and strength this day  
to build up your church  
in love for the world,  
in the making of disciples  
and to equip the saints for the work of ministry.  
Plant your hope deep within us.  
Open our eyes to a fresh vision of your kingdom.  
Give us wisdom for the common task.  
Draw us and all your Church deeper into Christ,  
our foundation and cornerstone,  
that we may work together as one body,  
in the power of the Spirit  
and for the sake of your glory. **Amen.**

### **What ministry does the Church of England need?**

6. The Task Group considered and endorsed the request expressed by dioceses through the Resourcing the Future exercise for a **significant increase in the number and quality** of ministerial leaders, lay and ordained.
7. The vision for ministry which shapes our proposals arises directly from the commitment expressed in the Resourcing the Future consultations by the dioceses to seek growth both in numbers and in spiritual depth . At present, if we take no action, we face a significant net decline in the number of stipendiary ministers and alongside this further decline in congregations and hence our capacity to serve every community.
8. Our vision as a Task Group is of a growing church with a flourishing ministry. We hope therefore to see
  - **every minister equipped to offer collaborative leadership in mission and to be adaptable in a rapidly changing context**
  - **a cohort of candidates for ministry who are younger, more diverse and with a wider range of gifts to serve God's mission**
  - **an increase of at least 50% in ordinations on 2013 figures sustained annually from 2020**
  - **the rapid development of lay ministries**
  - **a continued commitment to an ordained and lay ministry which serves the whole Church both geographically and in terms of church tradition.**
9. We believe that something like this vision is widely owned and shared across the Church of England at the present time. There are many good, creative and diverse initiatives being taken forward across dioceses as each seeks, with faith, hope and love, to re-imagine the ministry required to serve the mission of God in the present and the future.
10. We have not therefore sought to articulate a single ideal theology or description of ministry as the basis of our proposals other than that contained in the formularies of the Church of England. Rather we have sought to work through theological reflection on practice, developing our theological understanding in an iterative dialogue with the developing situation across the Church and across society. Our aim in the proposals we make is to strengthen this process of re-imagining ministry and education for ministry within dioceses and to enable the right resources to be applied to this vision.

## What resources are required for the task?

11. The group is clear that an increase of candidates of this magnitude will require a **significant increase in resources** invested in vocational work and in ministerial education.
12. **Confidence in the current system of resourcing is low.** It is not clear that the present arrangements ensure value for money. They are perceived to discourage innovative and flexible forms of ministerial education which are responsive to the needs of dioceses.
13. The Task Group proposes, in summary, **significant investment in vocations work, entrusting greater power to dioceses in making decisions about forms of training, a new stream of funding for lay ministry candidates and measures to improve quality in selection and at all stages of ministerial education.**
14. **We envisage retaining the present diversity of provision of types of initial training and assume that the recently established and well received Durham University validation framework and the Common Awards remain in place.**
15. **The full range of proposals put forward require further resources.** We have identified what **an estimated 50% increase in present investment (in other words another £10m per annum)** might achieve in supporting the dioceses to work towards a significant increase in numbers and quality. Further detailed financial projections are in preparation.

## How will we seek to grow the number of vocations?

16. **The Church of England as a whole needs to make a significant shift from a passive approach to vocations work to a proactive approach to seeking the numbers and quality of candidates the Church requires.**
17. **Such an initiative must be based wholly and deeply on prayer by the whole Church following both the command and the example of Jesus: “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest’ ” (Matthew 9.37).**
18. In addition, we are proposing a co-ordinated, episcopally led initiative in each diocese, based on prayer and fostering a culture of discipleship and vocation which actively seeks to increase the number of candidates offering for all forms of ministry by 50% per annum from present levels by 2020.
19. There are a number of key areas where it is vital to make further resources available nationally in vocations work as well as in ministerial education.
20. These include significant restructuring within the Ministry Division so that staff resource is dedicated to proactive leadership in vocations work. The annual cost of the new structure will be within the present budget.
21. We propose the expansion of the Church of England Ministerial Education scheme (in partnership with similar schemes) for under 30’s exploring vocation from the current level of 30 participants to 250 across all dioceses with a subsidy at the current level of £2k per capita per annum.

22. We aim to streamline the vocations process so that, in the case of those candidates who need it, vocational exploration can be begun and concluded within a year.
23. We propose the creation of a significant fund to enable the expansion of context based training accessible to all dioceses and taking account of the diverse and particular needs of a region. This builds on evidence that making this form of training available increases the pool of potential candidates.
24. We propose a new stream of funding for the training of lay ministers to respond to the aspirations of dioceses for developing professional lay ministry expressed in the Resourcing the Future report.
25. We encourage the development of new courses of training offered regionally or in dioceses for incumbents on the developing of vocations, recognising that at present a large proportion of vocations arise from a small proportion of parishes.

### **How effective and cost effective is our present ministerial education?**

26. The Task Group commissioned a major research programme to explore the outcomes of the several forms of ministerial education. The initial research results are available online at [http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/resourcing\\_ministerial\\_education](http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/resourcing_ministerial_education) for information and also for peer review. Further dissemination and discussion of the research are planned.
27. The research showed that 62% of ministers who responded perceived their initial formation in college or course positively. This finding sits alongside a significant number of qualitative responses about the lack of adequate preparation for the practice of ministry and the need for better integration of practice and theory.
28. **The Training Institution proves to be a more significant predictor of the effectiveness of training than the pathway or form of training.**
29. In relation to the second phase of Initial Ministerial Education during the training post (IME 2), the curate/training incumbent relationship is seen as critical for formation, and more so than the design of the formal diocesan programme for curates.
30. There is clear evidence that particular forms of high quality provision during IME 2 and then in Continuing Ministerial Development make a demonstrable contribution to the numerical and spiritual growth of congregations. These forms include leadership development programmes, church growth courses, ministry development review, professional development and role specific development.
31. **The RME research gives a positive message about current ministerial education provision in that the findings show no distinction between college and course pathways in relation to effectiveness related to numerical and spiritual growth and other measures. The full range of pathways can therefore be used with confidence, recognising that each pathway has its own excellence and offers distinctive benefits.**
32. Further research and reflection will continue into how the Church can sustain ways to monitor effectiveness of investment and the means by which excellence in training is fostered in every theological education institution and diocese.

## How should selection and training be reimagined and reshaped?

33. The Task Group offers a range of 12 specific proposals for testing and refinement, first in dialogue with the General Synod and then in wider consultation with Dioceses and training institutions. These proposals relate to every stage from selection to taking the role of responsibility and leadership, since the stages are linked and together sustain the value of the whole process. Some of the proposals are concerned with improvement in quality of selection and training. Others form the basis for a significant change in the way ministerial education is funded which is aimed at encouraging growth in numbers of ministers.

### *Proposal 1: Criteria, Reporting and Assessment*

34. In order to ensure high standard outcomes, the **selection criteria and the selection process will be reviewed** in the light of current and future needs for ministry. **Reporting and assessment processes** from selection through IME Phases 1 and 2 need also to be reviewed to support the development of candidates and to ensure consistency all through the formation process.

### *Proposal 2: Personal Learning Plans and Bishops' Guidelines*

35. All candidates will have a **personal learning plan** agreed with the diocese and covering the whole of IME to provide a flexible programme geared to individual need. **Bishops Regulations for training will be replaced with flexible, indicative norms (Bishops Guidelines)**. The plan would be drafted as part of the selection papers and then reviewed at key points during IME.

### *Proposal 3: Priority national funding*

36. **Special national funds** are proposed to continue to resource gifted individuals in training to prepare for strategic roles, for example in foundational theological work leading to teaching or research, as missional leaders, as those committed to serve in poorer dioceses including those in context based training in poorer parishes. These would supplement the standard grant (see Proposal 6 below) and be administered nationally.

### *Proposal 4: September Ordinations*

37. In order to make the most of the investment in IME, it is proposed that **ordinations will be moved to September each year**. This will provide more time available for formation and study and adds to the educational and training value of the final year of training by as much as one third.

### *Proposal 5: Investment in candidates after ordination*

38. In contrast to the present restriction on the use of Vote 1, it is proposed that funds may be **invested in candidates after as well as before ordination**, opening up the possibility of "Teach First" type schemes for ordination training and creating the option of accelerating the vocational process in the case of candidates suited to this.

### *Proposal 6: A standard level of grant for tuition*

39. In place of the current Vote 1 system and Bishops' Regulations, decisions about training pathways for individuals should be made in the diocese, in consultation with the candidate. **Each recommended candidate will attract a standard level of grant for tuition from a central fund to which all dioceses contribute in a similar way to the present Vote 1**. The grant may be used in a range of ways as the diocese sees fit, provided the training is from an approved provider. The diocese will decide whether resources additional to the standard grant need to be invested in the candidate's future

ministry, in each case according to need. No recommendation has been made at this stage about the level at which the standard grant should be set, though it is envisaged that it will be sufficient to enable a candidate to pursue an IME pathway leading to ordination.

***Proposal 7: Pooling of maintenance grants***

40. The **pooling of grants for maintenance** of candidates families during training will be **discontinued** and each diocese will cover these costs for its sponsored candidates. We believe this will give the dioceses freedom to determine how much of their training budget should be invested directly in ministerial education and how much in the support of candidates families.

***Proposal 8: Candidates over 50***

41. Candidates who will be under 50 at ordination will continue to attend a BAP, to ensure national commonality of standards. Candidates over the age of 50 at ordination **will be selected locally by the bishop**. Candidates over 50 at ordination will not receive the standard pooled grant: **the cost of their training** will fall directly to the diocese.

***Proposal 9: Transfer of Sponsorship***

42. The Task Group proposes also to explore ways to facilitate through financial and other means the **transfer of sponsorship of candidates** at the time of selection to dioceses where ministers are needed, and in particular to poorer dioceses.

***Proposal 10: Increasing investment in IME 2 and CMD***

43. To sustain the effectiveness of IME 1 into the first appointment and beyond, **the quality of IME Phase 2 and CMD provision need significant overall improvement**. The Task group proposes a development fund providing a substantial sum per annum to which dioceses can apply for matched funding to provide leadership development in preparation for posts of first responsibility. Similar provision of a fund for training for ministers in subsequent posts of responsibility is also proposed in order to sustain the effectiveness of IME. Grants would be made to kite marked schemes which can demonstrate high quality outcomes.

***Proposal 11: Length of training posts***

44. We propose to explore **benchmarking training posts to three years** as a norm rather than four as at present, though it would be open to dioceses to chose a longer period or indeed a shorter one for an individual candidate. The length of curacy should be determined by the time the candidate needs to meet the Formation Criteria. On the basis of the RME research we believe this will not significantly reduce the effectiveness of IME Phase 2.

***Proposal 12: Candidates for Lay Ministry***

45. In the Resourcing the Future Report, lay ministry plays a very significant part in the vision for future ministry articulated by dioceses. Overall, there is an aspiration to see numbers of volunteer lay ministers of different kinds grow by 48% (to over 17,500) and of paid lay ministers grow by 69% (to over 2,000). Further work will be done over the coming months to explore how dioceses envisage the development of lay ministry in more detail. We propose the application of **additional national funding to education for lay ministry** in three streams:

- Creating the possibility of the recognition of candidates for particular lay ministries through a national selection process and the funding of their training in a similar way to ordinands

- Matched funding available to dioceses to enhance their provision for lay ministry development (in parallel with Proposal 10 above)
- Funding to ensure that the Church maximises the value of the Common Awards for lay education and training in dioceses.

### **Consultation, partnership and next steps**

46. The Task Group is aware that the substantial changes proposed here make considerable demands on TEIs and dioceses and call for the continued development of close partnerships across the Church in the delivery of common goals. Sustaining high quality communication, consultation and the development of shared wisdom will be vital in drawing up the detailed proposals and in implementing change.
47. It is unlikely is that the proposals which encourage major growth can be implemented without substantial additional funding. This is being explored as part of the broader agenda of the five connected Task Groups.
48. The role of Ministry Division also would change significantly as a result of these proposals. Active consideration as to how the Division should be restructured has begun.

**+ Steven Sheffield**  
**January 2015**

### **Task Group Members**

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